

**GOVERNOR JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM**

Friday, February 16, 2007

Hello, this is Governor Jennifer Granholm.

February is Black History Month, and the story of African Americans in Michigan is an incredibly rich and complex one. The struggle for freedom, civil rights and economic and social equality is woven into the history of our state.

In 1870, Elijah McCoy – the son of former slaves who fled to Canada – moved to Ypsilanti and joined the Michigan Central Railroad as a fireman. McCoy, who had studied engineering, dreamt up a device called the “locomotive lubricator.” His invention revolutionized locomotives, improving fuel efficiency and allowing trains to travel much longer stretches without a stop.

McCoy was just one in a long line of important figures in Michigan and African American history. Michigan is the state of great fighters for freedom, like Sojourner Truth and conductors on the Underground Railroad. We are the state of great fighters in the ring, like Joe Lewis and Sugar Ray Robinson.

We are the state where Malcolm X grew up, where Motown got the world moving to a new beat, and where Magic Johnson first practiced his basketball brilliance. We are the state that gave hope to hundreds of thousands of Southern Blacks during the Great Migration. We are the state that became Rosa Parks’ home state and later her final resting place.

Martin Luther King, Jr. first told the world about his dream in Detroit, at one of the largest rallies held during the civil rights movement. And John Conyers was the driving force behind creating a national holiday for Dr. King.

African American history is central to Michigan’s history – and one of our greatest strengths today comes from our greatest diversity of people and ideas and talents.

There is no question, diversity matters. As much as it defines our past, it also defines our future. Survival and success in the global marketplace depends on the ability for individuals and corporations to work in diverse environments. When we bring together people of different backgrounds and different ways of seeing the world, we spark innovation...and innovation creates huge dividends.

If we fully embrace the mosaic that is Michigan, our diversity will help fuel our economic transformation.

As we face economic challenges, we have to remember that we are all in this state together. We did not arrive here in the same way, we didn’t arrive here at the same time, but we are all headed toward the same destination – we are One Michigan.

That simple idea makes Michigan a profoundly wonderful place to live. And that, to quote the phrase that Elijah McCoy’s invention made famous, is the Real McCoy.

Thank you for listening.